

What is claimed is:

- Add A1*
- A female electrical terminal comprising:
a connection section for connection to a conducting wire;
5 an opposing contact section for mating with a complementary male terminal, the contact section including a bottom wall, two sidewalls extending upwardly from opposite sides of the bottom wall, and a front end;
an entry portion adjacent the front end including an entrance for guiding a complementary terminal into the contact section; and
10 a single flexible contact element that is at least partially disposed within the contact section for urging a complementary male terminal into engagement with the bottom wall, the flexible contact element including a leading edge positioned outside the periphery of the entrance such that access to the leading edge is prohibited.
- 15 2. The electrical terminal of claim 1, wherein one of the contact section and the entry portion comprises an external opening, and wherein the contact element leading edge extends into the external opening.
- 20 3. The electrical terminal of claim 1, wherein a portion of the front end extends beyond the periphery of the entry portion such that an external opening is formed at the interface between the entry portion and the front end, and wherein the contact element leading edge extends into the external opening.
- 25 4. The electrical terminal of claim 3, wherein the external opening is above the entry portion and the contact element leading edge extends through the external opening.
- 30 5. The electrical terminal of claim 3, wherein the entry portion has an effective outer diameter that is smaller than an effective inner diameter of the front end.

6. The electrical terminal of claim 1, wherein the contact element leading edge is positioned between the front end and the entrance.
7. The electrical terminal of claim 1, wherein said connection section is in-line with said contact section.
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8. A female electrical terminal comprising:
 - a connection section for connection to a conducting wire;
 - an opposing contact section for mating with a complementary male

10 terminal, the contact section including a bottom wall, two sidewalls extending upwardly from opposite sides of the bottom wall, and a front end;

an entry portion adjacent the front end, wherein some of the front end extends beyond the periphery of the entry portion such that an external opening is formed at the interface between the entry portion and the front end; and

15 a single flexible contact element that is at least partially disposed within the contact section for urging a complementary male terminal into engagement with the bottom wall, the flexible contact element including a leading edge extending into the external opening.
- 20 9. The electrical terminal of claim 8, wherein the entry portion has an effective outer diameter that is smaller than an effective inner diameter of the front end.
- 25 10. The electrical terminal of claim 8, wherein the contact section and entry portion are made from a single sheet of material, the entry portion being formed by bending and converging first sidewalls, and the contact section being formed by bending and converging second sidewalls that are longer than the first sidewalls.
- 30 11. A female electrical terminal comprising:
 - a connection section for connection to a conducting wire;

5 a contact section comprising a first tubular portion that forms an insertion pathway for a complementary male terminal, and a second tubular portion between the first tubular portion and the connection section, wherein central axes of the first and second tubular portions are misaligned such that a space is formed outside of the insertion pathway;

10 a single flexible contact element at least partially disposed within the contact section for urging an inserted complementary male terminal into engagement with an inner wall of the contact section, the contact element including a leading edge that is positioned within the space.

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12. The electrical terminal of claim 11, further comprising an external opening in the contact section spaced apart from an entrance to the first tubular portion, and wherein the contact element leading edge extends through the external opening.

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13. The electrical terminal of claim 12, wherein the contact element leading edge is positioned externally and above the first tubular portion.

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14. The electrical terminal of claim 11, wherein the first tubular portion has a smaller effective inner diameter than that of the second tubular portion.

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15. The electrical terminal of claim 11, wherein the contact section is made from a single sheet of material, the first tubular portion being formed by bending and converging first sidewalls, the second tubular portion being formed by bending and converging second sidewalls that are longer than the first sidewalls.

16. The electrical terminal of claim 11, wherein engagement of the contact element by a complementary male terminal is limited to areas within the second tubular portion.

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17. A female electrical terminal comprising:
 a connection section for connection to a conducting wire;

- a contact section comprising a first tubular portion having an entrance for guiding a complementary male terminal into the contact section, and a second tubular portion between the first tubular portion and the connection section;
- 5 an external opening formed in the contact section and spaced apart from the entrance; and
- a single flexible contact element at least partially disposed within the contact section for urging an inserted complementary male terminal into engagement with an inner wall of the contact section, the contact element
- 10 including a leading edge that extends through the external opening.
18. The electrical terminal of claim 17, wherein the contact element leading edge is positioned above the first tubular portion.
- 15 19. The electrical terminal of claim 17, wherein engagement of the contact element by a complementary male terminal is limited to areas within the second tubular portion.
20. 20. An electrical connector comprising:
- a housing including a passage extending therethrough, and an opening formed in a face of the housing for providing access to the passage; and
- a female electrical terminal at least partially disposed within the passage, the female electrical terminal comprising:
- a connection section for connection to a conducting wire;
- 25 a contact section comprising a first tubular portion having an entrance for guiding a complementary male terminal into the contact section which has been inserted into the housing opening, and a second tubular portion between the first tubular portion and the connection section;
- an external opening formed in the contact section and spaced apart from the entrance; and
- 30 a single flexible contact element at least partially disposed within the contact section for urging an inserted complementary male terminal into

engagement with an inner wall of the contact section, the contact element including a leading edge that extends through the external opening.

21. The connector of claim 20, wherein some of the second tubular portion
5 extends beyond the periphery of the first tubular portion to form the external
opening.